

FEBRUARY 2, 1976

TITO INTERVIEW

ANNCR:

PRESIDENT TITO OF YUGOSLAVIA DISCUSSED THE FUTURE OF HIS COUNTRY IN AN INTERVIEW PUBLISHED IN YUGOSLAVIA THIS PAST WEEKEND. THE STORY FROM BELGRADE BY VOA CORRESPONDENT LARRY FREUND.

VOICE:

SOME TIME AGO BEFORE THE DEATH OF GENERALISSIMO FRANCO IN SPAIN, A BELGRADE NEWSPAPER ASKED IN A HEADLINE "AFTER FRANCO, WHO?". THAT IS THE SAME QUESTION THE PEOPLE TEND TO ASK ABOUT YUGOSLAVIA AND ITS EIGHTY-THREE YEARS OLD LEADER, PRESIDENT TITO--BUT RARELY IN PRINT AND NEVER IN HEADLINES. HENCE, THE INTEREST WHEN PRESIDENT TITO CHOSE TO DISCUSS THE TOPIC HIMSELF IN AN INTERVIEW PUBLISHED ON SUNDAY IN THE ZAGREB NEWSPAPER "VJESNIK."

"I CAN LEAVE ANY DAY WITHOUT ANYTHING CHANGING," PRESIDENT TITO DECLARED. ON PARTY AFFAIRS, HE SAID HIS PERSONAL INTERVENTIONS ARE BECOMING MORE AND MORE RARE; IN GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS, PRESIDENT TITO SAID THE CO-ACTIVE PRESIDENCY THAT WILL EVENTUALLY SUCCEED HIM HAS ALREADY PROVED ITSELF SUFFICIENT. YET, BECAUSE PRESIDENT TITO HAS BEEN SUCH A COMMANDING FORCE IN HIS COUNTRY SINCE WORLD WAR TWO, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION CONTINUE TO FOCUS ON THE POST-TITO PERIOD, A FACT YUGOSLAV LEADERS TEND TO REGARD WITH SOME IRRITATION.

THE YUGOSLAV GEOGRAPHY AND ITS POLITICS HAVE GIVEN THE BALKAN NATION A CENTRAL ROLE IN EUROPEAN AFFAIRS, AND ITS FUTURE OFTEN IS REGARDED AS A KEY TO DEVELOPMENT ON THE CONTINENT. ON THE DOMESTIC SCENE, YUGOSLAVIA HAS SEESAWED DURING THE PAST DECADE, BETWEEN BOUTS OF NATIONALISM IN ITS PROVINCES AND A STRONG CENTRAL AUTHORITY, BETWEEN LIBERALISM AND STRONG-HEADED LEADERSHIP. AT PRESENT, THE SWING IS TOWARD A CRACKDOWN ON DISSIDENCE OF ALL STRIPES, THE GOVERNMENT ADMITTING TO SOME TWO HUNDRED PEOPLE JAILED FOR VARIOUS ANTI-STATE ACTIVITIES. PROMINENT AMONG THOSE ARRESTED HAVE BEEN THE SO-CALLED COMFORMISTS, HARD-LINERS ADVOCATING STRONGER CENTRAL DIRECTION AND CLOSER TIES WITH MOSCOW. THE LATEST GROUP OF COMFORMISTS WAS INDICTED IN THE BOSNIAN CITY OF BANJALUKA JUST LAST WEEK, AND THE TRIAL OF ANOTHER GROUP IS EXPECTED TO BEGIN NEXT WEEK HERE IN BELGRADE.

IN HIS JUST PUBLISHED INTERVIEW, PRESIDENT TITO REVEALED THAT ARRESTS HAVE BEEN MADE OF ANOTHER GROUP OF PEOPLE, NOT FOR POLITICAL, BUT FOR ECONOMIC OFFENSES. HE SAID SCORES OF PEOPLE ARE IN PRISON FOR ECONOMIC CRIMES, AND HE SAID THEY HAVE INFLICTED VAST DAMAGES COSTING THOUSANDS OF MILLIONS OF DINARS. PRESIDENT TITO SAID THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN ARRESTS OF PEOPLE CONNECTED WITH FOREIGN SPECULATORS. HE ALSO PROMISED A CLOSE LOOK AT THE WEALTH ACCUMULATED BY YUGOSLAVS. BUT PRESIDENT TITO WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO EXEMPT YUGOSLAVIA'S HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF WORKERS IN WESTERN EUROPE WHO, HE SAID, HAVE EARNED THEIR MONEY FROM

RICH WORK AND SACRIFICES. THE GUEST WORKERS HAVE HELPED SUPPORT THE YUGOSLAV ECONOMY OVER THE YEARS BY SENDING A LARGE PROPORTION OF THEIR HARD-CURRENCY SALARIES BACK TO YUGOSLAVIA. ALTHOUGH MANY OF THE WORKERS ARE THEMSELVES RETURNING NOW TO YUGOSLAVIA IN THE FACE OF WESTERN EUROPE'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, THEIR EARNINGS ARE STILL REGARDED AS IMPORTANT, AND THE GOVERNMENT SHOWS NO INCLINATION TO TURN OFF THE TAP OF THE FOREIGN EARNING.

GH/PBM